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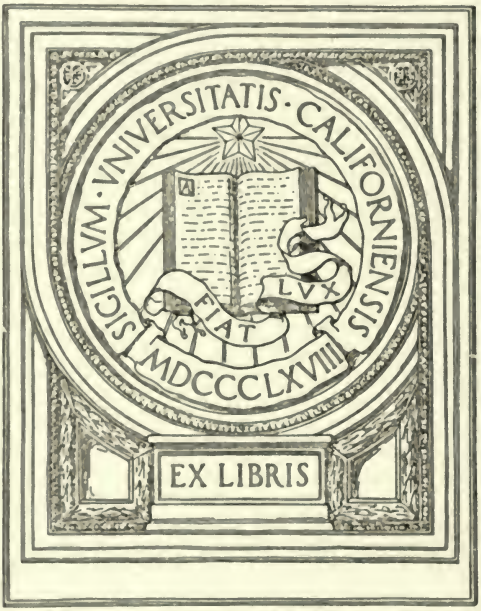
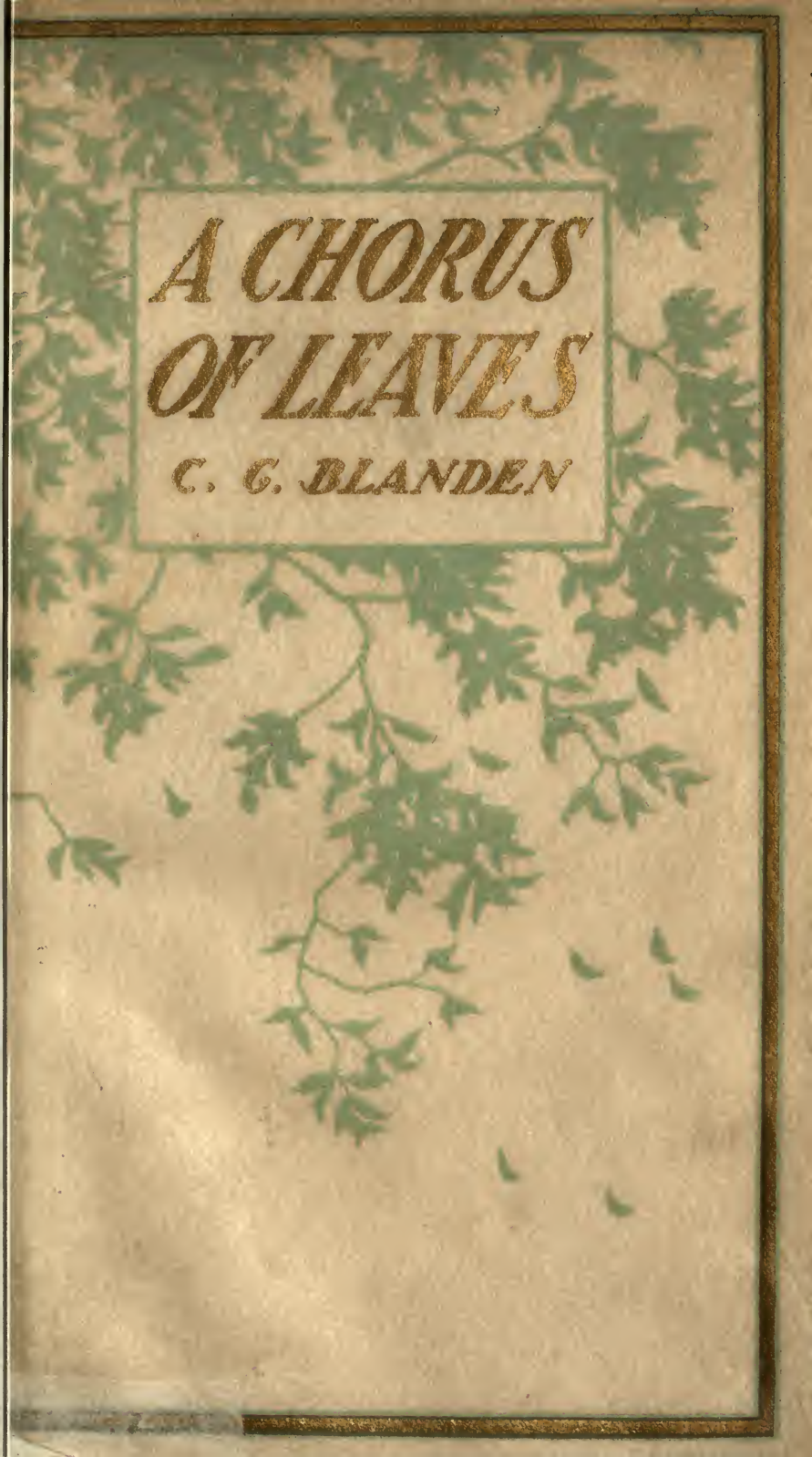


A CHORUS OF LEAVES

C. G. BLANDEN



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A Chorus of Leaves

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A Chorus of Leaves

by

Charles Erskine Scott Wood

From a painting by
William Keith

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Paul Elder and Company
Publishers, San Francisco

From a painting by
William Keith

A Chorus of Leaves

by

Charles G. Blanden

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San Francisco

The Tomoyé Press
San Francisco

Dedication.

To Wallace Rice.

Thou jealous guarder of the Muse's realm,
With ever-watchful eye unto her good,
Strict altar-keeper in the sacred wood,
That no rude comer may her overwhelm,
I pray thee (since unto these shores my helm
And urgent gales have brought me o'er the flood
Of rampant seas) that I with many a bud
Of fancy and with bow of fairy elm,
May shoot a fragrant arrow in her sky,
And herald so a heart has loved her long,
That now would worship, ere in earth it lie
And answer not to any spur of Song;—
Therefore, I come, and on these sands of time
Break at thy feet this little bale of rhyme.

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Awake!

Awake, ye woods,
    Ye fields, awake,
Ye solitudes
    Sweet music make;
Come, birds, and sing,
Bees, forth on wing,
For soft the winds do blow;
    Sing, sing, sing liberty—
    Sing liberty and joy
And freedom from the snow.

Awake, ye buds,
    And, grass, arise,
To welcome floods
    From April skies.
O brooks, forget
Your chains and let
Your merry music flow!
    Sing, sing, sing liberty—
    Sing liberty and joy
And freedom from the snow.

Awake, my heart,
    'Tis time you should
With winter part
    In time so good;
Come, join the throng

And swell the song
That all the world may know;
Sing, sing, sing liberty—
Sing liberty and joy
And freedom from your woe.

If I Were Love.

Would I were Love! my joy should be
Ever to linger near to thee.
Sleeping, on roses I would lie
In the bright summer of thine eye;
Waking, perchance I would go hide
In the heart-chambers of thy side,
And give thee, oh, such little frights,
For love, thou couldst not sleep o' nights.

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March.

When March his lusty trumpet blows
    Throughout our valleys drear,
The scattered, old, affrighted snows
    Like phantoms disappear.
Lo! now the watercourses shout,
    And soon their banners gay,
The royal grasses shaking out,
    Shall glad the face of day.

Bold bugler of the sun's return,
    Whose note the heart inspires,
In whose brave eyes such glories burn
    As dazzle mortal lyres,
Blow up thy merry legions strong,
    And this sad realm invest
With bud, with blossom and with song
    And all the laughing rest.

Sound, herald, sound thy breezy horn!
    The battle half is won
When thou dost call from morn till morn
    The edict of the sun.
More like a stately pomp shall be
    The coming of thy king,
Since where thou goest, startled, flee
    The enemies of spring.

Hail! Hail, O March, that canst so scare
The shadows of old earth
That fields do bloom and bees forth fare
And Hope renews her mirth!
When thou dost lie at April's feet,
Like some true warrior dead,
May she with blossoms, fair as sweet,
Adorn thy lowly bed.

And where thy sturdy form shall sleep,
Let violets arise
And many a vine of summer creep,
And zephyr breathe his sighs.
So shall thy warrior heart, content,
Outslumber Time's despite,
And in a calmer element
Find more of peace and light.

A Chorus of Leaves.

The Torch of Love.

She smiled on me, and in my heart
I felt the flames of Troy;
Full well I knew what Paris dreamed,
And what was Helen's joy.

The Awakening.

Lo! the grass has sprouted,
And the buds are pouted
    On my apple-tree;
All the hopes I doubted,
All the dreams I flouted,
    Stir like sap in me.

Go, call in the neighbors,
Sound the horns and tabors
    And the cymbals sound;
Shares are sprung from sabres!
Crowned are all my labors,—
    And may yours be crowned.

If Love Be There

If love be there, all marriage feasts
Are feasts of the Divine,
And where but water flowed before,
A plenitude of wine.

Anacreon.

Unto sweet love and to the lyre
    The bard of Teos gave his days.
Within his heart how warm the fire!
    Upon his brows how cool the bays!
His was the music of desire,
    Played down a thousand happy ways;
His was the soul, in star attire,
    Gave us Elysium in his lays.

The Time O' Year.

Oh, what's the time o' year?
    Green,—green things are growing
Far and near;
    Violets are blowing
Without fear;
    Rivulets are flowing,
Of icy thralldom clear.
Say, what's the time o' year?

Oh, what's the time o' year?
    You, robin, singing so,
    You, swallow, winging so,
    You, grasses, springing so,
Say, what's the time o' year?
    Is April, April, merry April—
Is April really here?

Here and Hereafter.

If love with this short life doth end,
Be thou my friend;
If love dies not,
In love let friendship be forgot.

Love Was Coming Down the Lane.

Love was coming down the lane,
Winged, rosy, blind,
In his hand his little bow,
Quiver slung behind.

Now, thought I, he cannot see:
If I stand aside,
He must pass me, ignorant,
Therefore satisfied.

Kept I silent in my place;
Near, more near, he came,
While the beating of my heart
Fanned each cheek to flame.

And I, anxious, held my breath;
He will pass me—no;
He is crying, pretty dear,
It should not be so.

Touched with pity, then quoth I:
"Weep, oh, weep no more!"
And he, laughing, sent his shaft
To my bosom's core.

Lo! Now the Sun.

A Chorus of Leaves.

Lo! now the Sun, with golden-flashing eye,
Doth fire his rosy altars in the east,
And all the congregated clouds do blush
Response, beholding them and their high-priest.

Till Joy Goes By.

Tears are the waters of those springs
Where Grief, with dark imaginings,
Doth sit and conjure up the stream —
Till Joy goes by with his bright dream;
When, lo! her magic is forgot,
And that sad tide which was, is not;
While she herself melts to a shade
That Joy doth banish from the glade,
As down those channels dry he sends
Laughter, with all his dimpled friends.

The Storm.

A Chorus of Leaves.

This moaning storm, this crackling sky—
    Lear is abroad tonight;
I would the filial Dawn were nigh,
    The sweet Cordelia, Light.

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Blow Gently, Soul of Winds.

Blow gently, Soul of Winds,
That in the garden finds
    The rose but newly blown;
Blow faintly, or you slay
And take fore'er away
    A glory not your own.

Blow softly, more and more;
Yet to the rose's core
    Delve down, and if you see
Therein a rude worm curled,
Blow coldest in the world
    And freeze him utterly.

There Ever Is Time.

Oh, let the bird sing,
    And let the sun shine,
This slumber is sweet
    As Lesbian wine!

Away! let me sleep;
    Away! let me lie;
There ever is time
    To put our dreams by.

The Song Maker.

He goes his way, alone, and no man knows
How keen his pleasures or how vast his woes.
His plummet sounds all seas, and from all height
Receives he first the tribute of all lights;
The past, the future — they are his; the hour
That's here he loves as he doth love a flower.
The human heart he reads as 'twere a book,
And like a seer into the soul doth look,
And from the world as from a mighty wood
He gathers the sweet seeds of solitude
(Which also are the seeds of Song), and deep
Within his breast he sows them, whence they le
To such delightful blooms of melody
That men do marvel, saying, "We are free!"
Or, "Let us hope," or, "Let us greed forget,"
Or, "Farther on let us our standard set;"
For one before us all the mountain thrills:
"The springs of life are higher up the hills."

The Wings of Time.

Oh, that this golden hour with thee
Had not the power to fly away!
Oh, love, that ever there should be
So sad a thing as yesterday!

And When My Petals Fall.

Come, woo me like a butterfly;
    My heart is rose today,
And lightly, lightly, lightly, I
    Would dream the hours away.

And when my petals fall?
    Oh, now, I have no care;
So love demand them all,
    The heart may well be bare.

The Lost Rose.

One time in hell there bloomed a rose,
    Dropped from high Heaven by a child;
The Souls, remembering not their woes
    For one too-fleeting moment, smiled.

And up there went a cry to Heaven
    That made its firm foundations quake:
"If roses three to us were given,
    This hell were heaven for their sake."

Then was in Heaven a merry shout
    As all the little children there,
With roses white, to blot hell out,
    Strewed all the regions of despair.

Poverty.

Had I the heart to steal a kiss
That Julia's lips would never miss,
My soul a princely Dives were—
And yet but Lazarus to her.

A Turkish Love Song.

One knocked at his beloved's door,
"And who is there?" a voice did say.
"'T is I," he answered, "bowed before
The gleaming star that is my day."

Then said the voice: "This house can hold
Not thee and me." The lover rose;
Where naught but Allah is, he told,—
In the Saharan waste,—his woes.

A year in solitude he prayed,
And fed his soul at Allah's shrine,
Then knocked upon the door and made
Upon his lips a holy sign.

"Now, who is there?" a soft voice said.
"It is thyself — thyself!" he cried;
And open flew the door, and wed
Were they ere the sweet echo died.

The Lover.

Lo! at the time appointed
    Into thy presence I come,
And like a prophet, anointed,
    I stand in thy Brightness, dumb.

I lift mine eyes to thy beauty,
    And, blinded, I turn away—
To tread in the presses of duty
    For ever and a day.

Love and Poesy.

Cupid, once upon a time,
Vowed that he would take to rhyme,
Threw his bow and barbs away,
Crowned his temples with some bay,
Filled his quiver up with ink
And so sat him down to think.
You had laughed to see him then,
Nibbling, nibbling at his pen,
Frowning till his brow serene
Was a furrowed dark demesne,
All his curls so tossed and tangled
As with Psyche he had wrangled.
In his cheeks — no roses there;
On his lips the wan of care;
Years and years he older seemed
Ere he had a bird's nap dreamed.
Not one little line he wrote,
Then with, oh, so sweet a note
Said he, "Cupid cannot be
Lord of Love and Poesy;
All his time to love must go.
He forgets his metres so,
Useless 't is for him to scan
All the passions of a man;
Enough to bid him throb and thrill,
Come what may and come what will:

Throb and thrill in Beauty's train
Though he win him but disdain."
Whereupon the tousled bay
From his temples off he tore,
Threw his ink and quill away:
"Poet will I be no more,
But with poets when they sing,
Faith, I'll go a-journeying;
Mount the airy heights they gain,
Spur them on to lofty strain,
Mix and mingle draughts divine
That shall fire their every line
With a music pure and high,
Sweet as roses when day closes;
Such is love and such am I,"
Saying which he said "Good-bye."

Fear Not.

O leaf that runnest fast
    Along my garden path,
Why fearest thou the blast
    And the bald year's wrath?

Fear not; all things are old,
    And all do seek repose;
Drink deeply of the cold—
    And dream of April's rose.

Send Round the Cup.

Come, fill the golden loving-cup
With amber winking wine,
And send it gayly on its round,
The hour — the hour's divine.
Awake the harps to music sweet
And scatter roses deep,—
A health to Beauty and her train,
Away, away with sleep.
Abroad do sing the nightingales,
The moon is coming up,
And twice a thousand stars have bloomed —
Send round the loving-cup!

'Tis summertime, the jewelled date
Of youth and joy and love,
When cheeks do glow and eyes do shine
And lips a cherry prove.
Another round! and let the song
Be merry that you sing,
The hours are swift — let them be bright
And happiness be king;
And let your hearts with rhythm beat
And let your souls be free,
For life is hope and hope is bliss
And bliss is melody.

In Season.

'Twas on a day full forty birds
    Did in my garden mate,
That I, with just as flutter-words
    As theirs, sealed my sweet fate.

Cupid, at Me Laughing.

Cupid, at me laughing
    As I happened by—
Cupid, slyly chaffing
    As I chanced to sigh,
Of his darts I stript him,
    Shut him in a cell;
When he wept I whipt him,
    And I whipt him well.

Woe is me! my passion
    Drove me from his grace;
Hence, behold my ashen
    Pallor and sad face.
Now, when by I wander,
    Cupid stares, alas!
And I, fond and fonder
    Of him, weep and pass.

The Woman Speaks.

Because you love me, sir, so much
    You have no tongue to shout it?
Pray, love me just a trifle less
    And tell me all about it.

Ashes of Dreams.

Hope, like a clown in motley dressed,
Keeps up a chatter in my breast,
Laughs at my sorrows, mocks my tears,
Shakes a child-rattle at my fears,
And, pointing to some happy stars,
Bids me forget my flaming scars
And pluck the thorns that pierce me still;
And so my cup with nectar fill.
No doubt this sage advice is good,
And I would take it if I could.
But what is hope when love is dead?
When all the petals bright are shed,
Whose hand so skilful as to stud
The brow of Autumn with a bud?
What happy star can light again
The ashes of the dreams of men?

Occupied.

A very minster is thy heart,
    Wherein so many dead loves be,
I fancy that when I depart
    There'll be no corner, love, for me.

Roses.

These are his roses;
    Where is his heart?
His gift discloses
    Consummate art:
Friendship exposes;—
    Is love his part?
These are his roses;
    Where is his heart?

Hyssop.

I cannot bear your load of grief,
    Nor you my joy lift up;
The dew that gleams on my bright leaf
    Were hyssop in your cup.

Immunity.

I am a sea nymph, and I dwell
In the pearl palace of a shell.
When pleasant is the sky, I sing,
At my bright portal, to the king
Of the great tides; but when the blast
Piles up the waves to mountains vast,
I keep my house in a safe cove
And dream of the calm things I love.
O mortal, when perchance you find
My home up-driven by the wind
And the over-angered, hard sea,
I pray thee be not rough with me;
Preserve my house, and so shall I
Desert it not, but ever try
(If thou wilt listen to my lay)
To please with what sweet songs I may!
But if thou lovest me full well,
Give to its element the shell,
And ever after, night and morn,
For thee shall Triton blow his horn,
And so proclaim thee rightly free
From the huge perils of the sea.

The House.

This I've found out, beyond a doubt:
A house without a woman in it
Is just a nest without the linnet;
It turns to lumber in a minute.

Violet.

O frail and unassuming flower,
How sleeps my love below?
Thy virtues seem a part of her,
Thine were her eyes, I know.
Her heart was kind, her manner sweet,
She had a timid air;
I know that love made up her soul,
And she was heavenly fair.

I know that she is sleeping now
Beneath the mound you grace,
And when I look into your eyes
I seem to see her face;
Her spirit pure within you dwells,
And, silent, teaches me
What loveliness to time belongs,
What to eternity.

I Question Not.

Fate, I question not thy blows,
Fall when fall they may;
I'm at peace with all my foes,
I am old and grey.

Fate, I thank thee for thy fare,
Years of ample cheer.
Strike, and leave me cold and bare;
Strike—but find no fear.

The Old Moon.

I wonder what the old Moon thinks
As, gaunt and grey, she views
The fresh young Morn that, blushing, drinks
Cool cups of lucent dews.

As in the sun-drenched sky she pales,
And ghostlike onward goes,
Sighs she for her late-glamoured vales
And the sweet-sleeping rose?

Or are her thoughts of sadder things—
Of darkness and the tomb?
Remembers she, or not, she springs
From her dead self to bloom?

O Life, that buds and blooms and dies—
How know we death is real,
When we, not watchers in all skies,
All truths can not unseal?

The Wreath.

To Worth I flung a wreath of bay;
He looked, he smiled; he did not bend;
But Craft stooped down along the way,
Picked up and wore it to the end.

A Chorus of Leaves.

A Fairy Song.

Welcome! welcome! fairies all.
Welcome! welcome! to this hall—
To this still and moonlit glade.
Here shall all your troubles fade;
Here, in mead, shall drown your cares,
And ye breathe ambrosial airs.
Ho, you players, music sweet!
Come, you dancers, flash your feet!
Scatter blossoms! and to each,
Wine of our best vintage reach.
Welcome one and welcome all
To the fairies' festal hall!
Ho! you warders of this land,
On our leafy borders stand;
Keep us guard till morning-star
That no imp our revels mar;
Let no slight intruder pass;
Pierce him with a spear of grass,
Bind him with a chain of thistle—
Till the first red robin whistle.

Wingless.

This house was once the home of Youth,
'T is now the home of Age—
Or has the butterfly, forsooth,
Grown wingless in his cage?

Griselda.

I would not try thee as was tried
The patient wife Grisel;
I know that thou couldst do her tasks
As sweetly and as well.

And if I knew that thou in all
Her trials hard shouldst fail,
Too much I love thee, dearest one,
To see thee pine and pale.

Yea, more, methinks, I'd love thee, sweet,
If thou her lot shouldst flout,
And say: "He loves but ill the rose
Who plucks one petal out."

To Pygmalion.

Oh, foolish one to bring to life
    The dream of thy poetic skill;
A million women were thy wife
    To one that could thy dream fulfill!

Where Sleep the Leaves.

An unseen shepherd is the wind,
And singing as he goes
He drives, wherever he may find,
The petals of the rose.

All huddling on into the fold
Of the cold night, they run—
To where, when winter's lean and old,
The crocus finds the sun.

Little Lives.

How many little lives, alas!
Die with sad summer, in the grass;
How many little songs grow still,
Because no more the blossoms spill
Sweet nectars for them, morn and eve—
Because the chill winds round them grieve!
Yet I live on into the cold,
Deep snow—till that I wander, old,
Till I am Winter's brother, white,
And longing for the warm spring light.

Not long, not long, O little friends,
The triumph that our Mother lends
To me,—an hour, a day, a year,
And I shall sleep upon my bier
As full of peace as there is need,
With that same rest ye do possess,
Hid in the bosom of the mead
And sealed in dim forgetfulness!

Delusion.

'Tis ever the moth and the flame, my dear,
'Tis ever delusive things
That, yearning, we follow until, my dear,
We lose our golden wings.

And like the rash Icarian youth,
We fall in a sorry sea,
Thereafter to wander, a lonesome ghost
Of that which we longed to be.

To Be Immortal.

To be immortal—it were dross,
Aye, it were immortal loss
To live for ever, if we might
Not climb (not soar) from vale to height.
To be immortal—just to dwell
In heaven were not heaven but hell.
And so with love. Progression is
The very essence of its bliss;
If it grow not, then must it fade—
Be not Love's self but just Love's shade.

Bring Hither Your Roses.

Bring hither your roses
And hither your rue,
And twine me two garlands
All wet with the dew;
The roses for Beauty,
O'ergiven to doom,
Shall form a bright chaplet
To lie on her tomb.

The rue round our temples
We'll bind for our grief,
To gently remind us
That beauty is brief,
That still we adore it,
And long shall adore,
Though its splendor is faded,
Its glory no more.

Whose heart is so hollow,
Whose soul is so bare
That never the spirit
Of beauty breathes there?
Oh, none is so lonely
And none is so poor,
If only her shadow
May brighten his door!

So pluck the bright roses
    And gather the rue,
And weave me two garlands
    All wet with the dew;
The roses for Beauty
    That lies on her bier,
The rue for the ransom
    Of many a tear.

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Love Knows.

Love knows, Love knows his unseen dart
Shall wound us when his bow he bends.
Unto the strength of every heart
To every heart some grief he sends,
For unto him is given the task
To tear from the white soul the mask
That shrouds it; his to measure, sound
Its depths and learn just how profound
Or shallow 'tis. For till he know
Our full capacity for woe,
He cannot tell how great — or small —
The joy must be to quench it all.

Finis.

A Chorus of Leaves.

Dance your last dance, you little leaves,
Shake your red sandals in the sun,
For even now the cold air weaves
A snowy shroud for every one.

Fast fall the flakes that soon shall hide;
Dance your last dance, you happy fays,
And so let me, whate'er betide,
Go to life's end down mirthful ways.

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